

# Mind Full

## “Alone with my thoughts”

Recommendations for a new approach to  
young people’s mental health support

including the results of a YouGov poll of 2,000 young people in the UK

# CONTENTS

- 3/** Foreward
- 4/** Executive Summary
- 9/** Introduction
- 10/** The results of our survey: Young people's experiences of mental health
- 14/** Access to existing services: putting the results in context
- 17/** The solution: A new approach to delivering mental health services

Poor mental health among young people remains one of the last great medical taboos in the UK today. Despite the epic scale of the issue – three children in every classroom suffering from a diagnosable mental health problem, with thousands more teetering on the brink – and the terrible long-term effects this can have, on both individuals and society at large, we have so far failed to find an appropriate solution. Instead of a nation where young people are educated about their mental health and supported to be healthy, happy and fulfilled, we have a culture of stigma, misunderstanding, ignorance and shame. Rather than being encouraged to speak out and seek help – and receiving appropriate support when they do – young people suffer in silence, wither on waiting lists or simply receive no help at all.

This is not acceptable. Our young people deserve better. In fact, they have a right to more. We need a sea-change in how we approach their mental health and wellbeing. And the time for that change is now.

With our new online support service, MindFull, we aim to lead this change. Through MindFull, we will focus on prevention and early intervention, teaching young people what good mental health and wellbeing are, and helping them to achieve both. Through MindFull, we'll allow young people to actively choose their path to mental health, and provide them with the support to do so – whenever they need it, and wherever they are. Through MindFull, we will break down stigma and empower young people – to transform not only their own lives, but the lives of others too.

But we cannot do this alone – we need a collective commitment to deliver the necessary change. Tackling young people's mental health and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility, demanding innovative thinking and groundbreaking partnerships across all sectors. So I invite you to stand shoulder to shoulder with MindFull as we embark on the journey to delivering a better, brighter and happier future for thousands of young people across the UK.

**Emma-Jane Cross, CEO, MindFull, part of The BB Group**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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“Good mental health doesn’t start in hospital or the treatment room. It starts in our workplaces, our schools and our communities... In fact everyone has a part to play.”

**Ed Miliband MP, Leader of the Labour Party, 2012**

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“We will not deliver real improvements in people’s health and wellbeing without parity of esteem between physical and mental health.”

**Paul Burstow MP, March 2013**

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Mental health and wellbeing is crucial to the development of every young person. We have an obligation to provide a safe, healthy environment for young people in which they can thrive and reach their potential.

Yet it is estimated that at least 850,000 young people suffer from a diagnosable mental health problem<sup>1</sup>. On top of this, for many more, issues around anxiety, stress and body image lead to poor emotional wellbeing, meaning they have lower levels of resilience, and are less able to cope with life’s challenges. Left unchecked, this can spiral into acute, long-term mental illness.

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“I did try to talk to people when I felt low, but I found they couldn’t understand. They would always tell me the same thing ‘Just stop. Don’t hurt yourself. It’s that simple.’ But it was never that simple to “just stop”. It was an addiction, a compulsion. I was screaming inside, why did no one know what I was doing? How could they not see how I was feeling?”

**Eleanor (24), was 13 when she started self-harming**

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<sup>1</sup> The Office for National Statistics Child and Adolescent Mental Health Survey shows that 9.6%, or nearly 850,000, children and young people aged between 5-16 years have a mental disorder. Results published in Green, H., McGinnity, A., Meltzer, H., et al. (2005) Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain. London: Palgrave.

## A survey of young people's mental health

MindFull, a new mental health charity, commissioned YouGov to carry out a study of over 2,000 young people aged 16 - 25 to understand their experiences of mental health. Young people were asked to reflect on their experiences before they were 16, and complete an online survey. The survey results reveal that:

# 1 IN 5<sup>2</sup>

children have symptoms of depression



# 1/3

Almost a third of children (32%) have thought about or attempted suicide. 29% say that they have self-harmed because they felt down.



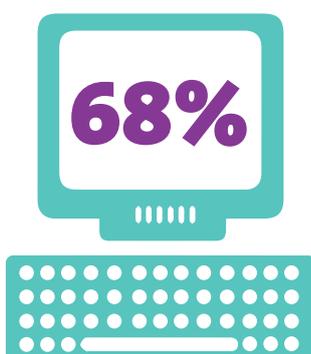
Almost 40% of young people said they had found it hard to leave the house when they were under 16 because they felt down.



Of those that spoke to someone, most confided in a friend (57%), followed by parents (54%) and a face to face counsellor (32%)

# 52%

Over half (52%) of those who had shown signs of depression when they were under 16 felt let down by their experiences of mental health support.



Over two thirds (68%) think that putting mental health services online would be an effective way to tackle mental health issues among young people, whereas only 2% of young people said that medicine alone is the best way to treat mental health issues.

<sup>2</sup>Where children are referred to this is based on the retrospective view of young people surveyed, before they were sixteen years old.

## Access to existing services

These findings are set against a backdrop of significant change in mental health services. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have experienced cuts in funding and the restructure of the NHS has changed the way that children and young people's services are commissioned.

Negative attitudes to mental health persist and young people have difficulty in discussing their own wellbeing. The taboo needs to be broken, and transformed into a culture of openness and support, so young people can feel comfortable accessing the help they require.

Without successful intervention, low educational attainment, unemployment, and increased risky behaviours are all outcomes from poor childhood mental health. We are at risk failing a generation of young people.

MindFull is calling for four changes to the provision of child and adolescent mental health support services:

### 1. EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

Embed mental health as a core theme in the national curriculum  
Provide access to counselling and mentor support in schools for all young people who need it



### 2. INCREASED PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Improve services – focus on early intervention, and provide more counselling therapeutic support for young people across the UK



### 3. HELP YOUNG PEOPLE TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER

Provide community awareness campaigns and peer mentor programmes to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for children and young people



### 4. PROVIDE ONLINE ACCESS TO SERVICES

Provide access to safe online support services that understand and address the mental health and wellbeing needs of children and young people



## The Solution

MindFull is an online service for 11 to 17 year olds that combines the use of professional counselling and psychotherapy with self-help resources and peer support. It uses social networking technology to bring together counsellors and volunteers, and provide a practical, accessible and safe space for young people in distress or who just want to talk.

MindFull is an **early intervention** approach. It is designed for young people who may not have engaged with any mental health or wellbeing services before.

MindFull provides a place where young people can **talk to a qualified counsellor**, or access self-help, giving them a choice of support.

MindFull creates a community where **young people can talk to other young people** – trained peer mentors who understand, have gone through similar issues, and can provide empathy and advice.

MindFull is **online**, meaning it is efficient, cost-effective, and unaffected by geographical boundaries or time constraints. It provides young people with a private, anonymous and easily accessible entry into mental health support services, in a format they recognise and trust, and can access whenever they need it, wherever they are. Online counselling through MindFull can deliver the same, if not better, mental health outcomes as offline counselling at approximately 15% of the cost – and without long waiting times.

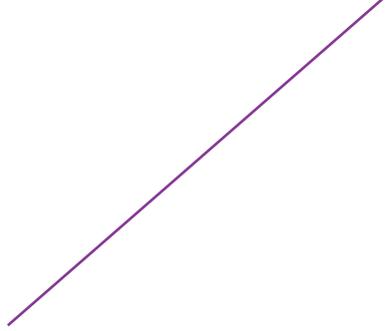
## CASE STUDY - JENNY (20)

Jenny was officially diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) at the age of 17 while doing her A-levels, but she thinks it all started much earlier when she was about eight or nine years old. As a child, she struggled with intrusive thoughts and became extremely fearful that her family would die.

Later as a teenager, Jenny started a ritual of repeated checking before going to bed to cope with the stress of exams – making sure all switches were off and doors were locked – but the anxiety about missing a check would keep her awake at night.

Eventually the exhaustion meant she couldn't concentrate on her schoolwork, and she was constantly close to tears. Her Mum realised that something was wrong and convinced her to go to the doctors, who referred her to a mental health nurse for fortnightly appointments.

Jenny says that asking for help is extremely difficult as you think you won't be taken seriously or that your problem isn't bad enough: *"Experiencing mental health difficulties can be extremely isolating, and sometimes even when there is support all around you, it can be so hard to take that first step to getting the help you need."*



Jenny believes it is also difficult for young people to understand mental health issues because they don't have enough knowledge of the symptoms: *"I think it's really important that young people know as much as they can about different problems as soon as possible so they get help early, rather than half way through Sixth Form like with me"*.

Now a University student, Jenny is getting the support she needs from a mentor, but she thinks that an online service like MindFull would have been hugely helpful when she was younger:

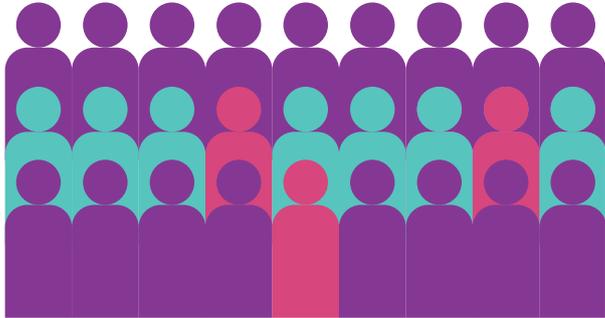
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*"I definitely think getting counselling and advice online would have helped. I found the face-to-face counselling very intense and uncomfortable. Also, I had to leave school early and it became hard to explain to my friends, which also became stressful. So, having access to something that is private and gives you the chance to speak to people your own age would make things a lot easier. It could be the first step in changing the life of a young person suffering from any mental and emotional issues"*.

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# INTRODUCTION



Over

# 850,000

young people in the UK – or three children in every classroom – suffer from a diagnosable mental health problem. Many more experience symptoms relating to anxiety and depression.

Poor mental health stops young people from enjoying life and fulfilling their potential.<sup>3</sup> If ignored, low level symptoms can develop into more severe problems that blight the rest of the person's life. Alongside the human cost, studies show the cost to the UK economy of poor mental health will reach almost £89m per annum by 2026 if treatment and care arrangements remain unchanged.<sup>4</sup>

This report argues the case for a *new approach* to supporting young people's mental health, combining professional counselling and peer support, to provide advice and guidance to young people online when they need it. The report is published at the launch of a new charity – **MindFull**. MindFull aims to provide early mental health and wellbeing support to young people, raising awareness of mental health and giving them the emotional resilience they need to live full, productive, healthy lives.

## What is in this report

This report presents the findings of a new survey of over 2,000 young people in the UK, describing their experiences of mental health. The survey was conducted by independent polling company YouGov and sheds light on the problems of poor mental health, the associated stigma, and young people's experience of seeking support.

Based on the findings of this survey, the report calls for **a transformation in the way we address young people's mental health by investing in services which focus on prevention and early intervention, give young people a choice in the kind of help they receive, offer timely access to peer and professional support – and engage with them via a medium that they trust and understand.**

<sup>3</sup> For example, young people who experience mental health problems score lower in their GCSE attainment (Meltzer, H., Singleton, N., Lee, A., Bebbington, P., Brugha, T & Jenkins, R. (2002), 'The Social and Emotional Circumstances of Adults with Mental Disorders'. Office for National Statistics.)

<sup>4</sup> McCrone, P. et al (2008) Paying the price: the cost of mental health care in England to 2026. King's Fund: London.

# THE RESULTS OF OUR SURVEY: YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF MENTAL HEALTH

MindFull commissioned independent polling company YouGov to conduct a survey of 2,090 young people aged 16 – 25 across the UK, to understand their experiences of mental health and the support they receive. Young people were asked to reflect on their experiences before they were 16, and complete an online survey. The research was conducted between 20th February and 4th March 2013. Data is weighted by age, gender and working status in order to be representative of this age group. This section outlines some of the key findings of the survey.

## The scale of the problem

- 20% of children have symptoms of depression, according to NHS criteria
- Almost a third (32%) of children have thought about or attempted to end their own life
- 29% say they harmed themselves on purpose when they were under 16 because they felt down
- 12% of young people say they have felt down or depressed nearly every day in the last few weeks
- The main reasons why children felt down were stress at school (54%), worrying about their future (53%), and not feeling like they are good enough (52%)
- 12% of young people felt like they were a failure nearly every day when they were under 16.

# 12%

of young people say they have felt down or depressed nearly every day in the last few weeks



## The effect of mental health problems on young people's lives

- 39% of young people said they found it hard to leave the house when they were under 16
- 24% of those who said they have ever had a mental health problem said their school or work life was affected every day (78% said it had been affected in general) because of their mood
- 61% of those who said they have ever had a mental health problem said they skipped school or college when they were under 16 because they felt down
- 63% of those who said they have ever had a mental health problem said they had trouble concentrating on things in the last few weeks
- 77% of those who said they have ever had a mental health problem said they distanced themselves from their family when they were under 16

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“People don’t understand the effect that depression has on you – I hate it when people dismiss it as simply teenage angst. Some days I feel so low it can be a struggle to do things that I normally love, like reading and writing. We desperately need more education about mental health issues, so young people can spot the signs early.”

**Jessica, 16**

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### The stigma of mental health problems

- 52% of those young people who said they have ever had a mental health problem did not speak out because they were embarrassed. 30% said that they didn’t want to be a burden.
- 25% of young people felt they had no-one to turn to when they were under 16
- 16% of young people didn’t seek help because they didn’t want to speak to someone face-to-face when they were under 16



**79%**

of young people think it is important for young people to be encouraged to talk about their mental health

### Talking about mental health

- 79% of young people think it is important for young people to be encouraged to talk about their mental health
- 76% of young people that said they have ever had a mental health problem said they didn’t want to bother anyone with their problems
- Children are most likely to speak to their friends about mental health issues (40% tried to speak to a friend when they were under 16 compared to only 19% who spoke to a GP)

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“I locked up how I felt and I couldn’t talk to anyone. You feel like you are in a box and you scream and scream but no-one can hear you, no-one can help.”

**Sophie, 18**

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<sup>5</sup> The definition of depression is defined using the standard NHS Patients’ Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9).

## Mental health and education

- 64% of young people think that including education on mental health issues in the national curriculum would be an effective way to tackle mental health issues among young people today
- 62% said having a dedicated person to look after students' mental health in every secondary school would be an effective way to tackle mental health issues amongst young people
- 67% said teacher training would be an effective way to tackle mental health issues amongst young people
- The thing young people who have ever had a mental health issue would have liked most when they were under 16 and felt down was to have learnt about mental health and coping strategies at school (49%)



# 62%

said having a dedicated person to look after students' mental health in every secondary school would be an effective way to tackle mental health issues amongst young people

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"It's becoming more and more important that mental health issues amongst young people are addressed. The amount of pressures these days on students is incredible - pressure of exams, feeling that they need to be 'cool' and it no longer ends at the school gates, as now social media places them under even more scrutiny. This pressure mounts and they don't always feel able to talk to a teacher. By training young people to be mentors we hope it will tackle some of these problems before they escalate."

**Andrew Dean, Head of Business, Economics and Enterprise, John Fisher School, May 2013**

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**52%**

of young people who said they have ever had a mental health problem feel let down by their experiences of mental health support

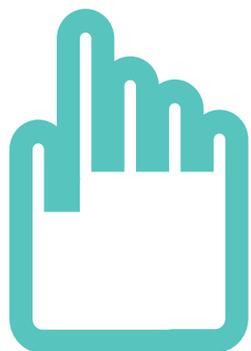
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of those who showed symptoms of depression according to NHS criteria when they were under 16, and spoke to people about it, never got the help they wanted

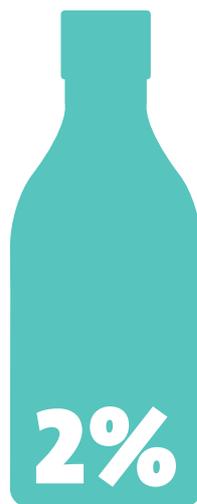
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**76%**



of young people who have ever had mental health issues think putting mental health services online is an effective way to tackle mental health issues for young people (compared to 68% of all young people)

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2% of young people think medicine alone is the best way to treat mental health issues

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**68%**

of those who said they have ever had a mental health problem think young people should be more involved in designing and delivering mental health services

## ACCESS TO EXISTING SERVICES: PUTTING THE RESULTS IN CONTEXT

Mental health problems affect hundreds of thousands of young people every day, many of whom fail to get any support. This section provides background information on existing mental health services.

### Existing services are failing to meet the need

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“Mental health has been a Cinderella service - poorly funded compared with other conditions and not spoken about nearly enough either inside or outside [the House of Commons]. It is the largest single cause of disability, with 23% of the disease burden of the NHS, yet the NHS spends only 1% of its budget on mental health problems.”

**Nicky Morgan MP, June 2012**

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Recent initiatives have placed young people’s mental health on the Government’s agenda. The 2011 national strategy ‘No health without mental health’ acknowledged the importance of promoting mental health through early intervention and support.<sup>6</sup> It states that ‘by promoting good mental health and intervening early, particularly in the crucial childhood and teenage years, we can help to prevent mental illness from developing and mitigate its effects when it does.’

The responsibility for providing mental health services for young people falls on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) teams, which include staff from different disciplines, and provides a tiered approach to supporting young people. However, CAMHS teams have suffered significant cuts since 2011. A review found that 34 out of the 51 local authorities in England have reduced CAMHS budgets since 2010, including as much as by 41% in Derby and 35% in Norfolk.<sup>7</sup>

These cuts have hit a system that is already under strain. Of the 850,000 young people with a diagnosable mental health problem, almost 75% get no treatment.<sup>8</sup> Alongside this, there has long been criticism of the NHS’s over-reliance on medication as a primary treatment to manage symptoms of poor mental health, even with its investment in the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme.<sup>9</sup> For those ‘in the system’, resource constraints and long waiting lists often mean they don’t receive the long-term, intensive treatment that their mental health problems require.

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<sup>6</sup> Department of Health (2011) No Health without Mental Health: a cross-government mental health outcomes strategy for people of all ages.

<sup>7</sup> Young Minds ‘Local Authorities and CAMHS budgets 2012/13’ briefing (2013).

<sup>8</sup> The Centre for Economic Performance Mental Health Policy Group (2012) How mental health loses out in the NHS. London School of Economics 2012

<sup>9</sup> See [www.iapt.nhs.uk/about-iapt](http://www.iapt.nhs.uk/about-iapt).

## CASE STUDY - JESSICA

Sixteen year old Jessica has suffered panic attacks from a young age. When she was 10, the anxiety became so bad that she was having three or four attacks a day and was prescribed a course of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) by her GP. But after being told the waiting time was three to six months, her family decided to pay for help privately.

Things started to settle down for a while, but when she was 14, Jessica started to feel down without knowing why.

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*“At first I didn’t realise it was depression, because what I’d read in the media made me think about being sad, but I didn’t feel anything - just numbness. It was like an overwhelming pressure pushing down on me, making me feel claustrophobic.”*

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She didn’t tell anyone about the way she was feeling until she was 15, and even though she started to have suicidal thoughts, it was six months before she felt able to tell her mum and get help. Her mum, Jo, says “I feel terribly guilty and I’m always thinking why didn’t I see it, why didn’t I pick up on it earlier? Sometimes I am so desperate because when she has a bad day she can be screaming and shouting and I just don’t know what to do. I have a permanent sick feeling in my stomach because I don’t know what I’m coming home to.”

As a parent, Jo welcomes the new online service that MindFull offers: “Online counselling would have been so helpful for Jessica because she hid a lot of what she was feeling away from us and isolated herself from her friends. I think other young people would feel more comfortable talking to someone online so that they can let it all out, especially if they are too scared to tell their parents or their friends.”

Despite the funding cuts to CAMHS services, mental health has an increased profile with the implementation of the government’s 2011 strategy. New Health and Wellbeing Boards aim to provide a local lead for assessing needs, and identify the main issues faced in communities.<sup>10</sup> Youth mental health must be a part of this needs assessment, with a corresponding requirement to develop new services to address these needs.

How mental health services are delivered has become an important issue. Our survey showed that young people have opinions about how this: over two thirds (68%) of respondent think that putting mental health services online would be an effective way to tackle the problem, whereas only 2% of young people said that medicine alone is the best way to treat mental health issues.

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<sup>10</sup> Department of Health (2011) No Health without Mental Health: a cross-government mental health outcomes strategy for people of all ages.

## Stigma continues to surround mental health

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“I think my family picked up that something was wrong, but I wouldn’t talk about it, as a lot of kids don’t, they just keep it to themselves.”

**25 year old female, talking about her experience as a 14 year old**

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Attitudes towards mental health have proved hard to change. As our survey shows, young people have difficulty in discussing their own mental health and often feel unable to talk about their concerns. Nearly a quarter of young people (23%) who had symptoms of depression before they were 16 didn’t talk to anyone about how they were feeling, with many citing embarrassment, fear of rejection and becoming a burden as reasons for this. There remains a culture of mental health problems being seen as a weakness and individuals wanting to ‘keep it to themselves’. This highlights a need for a change in our attitudes to mental health. The taboo needs to be broken and transformed into a culture of openness, so young people can access support at the earliest opportunity. Whether young people first talk to family members, friends or professionals, they need to be confident they will be listened to, understood and supported, receiving a positive response and offers of help.

In recent years, public figures, including celebrities and politicians, have begun to speak out about their own mental health, and have used their experiences to help combat the stigma that people with mental health conditions face in their daily lives. This openness and frankness needs to filter down into schools and health services need to provide safe, supportive spaces for young people to feel confident to talk about their mental health to their families, teachers, or doctors.

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“Now I am going to throw my notes away - I thought long and hard last night about whether to do this - and talk about my own mental health problems. In 1996, I suffered quite a deep depression related to work and other things going on in my own life. This is the first time I have spoken about this. Indeed, some people in my family do not know what I am going to talk about today. Like a lot of men, I tried to deal with it myself - you do not talk to people... It is hard, because you do not always recognise the symptoms. It creeps up very slowly... Whether my having made this admission will mean that the possibility of any future ministerial career is blighted for ever for me, I do now know.”

**Kevan Jones MP, June 2012**

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# THE SOLUTION: A NEW APPROACH TO DELIVERING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The evidence presented in this report clearly demonstrates the need for change in the way we support young people's mental health and wellbeing. As well as severe mental health problems, our survey shows the prevalence of low level mental health and wellbeing issues which, if not addressed, have the potential to become more severe. This section outlines our solution to this: investing in the new approach offered by MindFull.

## What a new approach must include

Young people with mental health problems are not getting the support they need. Existing services are over-stretched and it remains difficult for young people to talk about their problems. Instead, services need to provide help when it is needed, provide an appropriate level of support, and become better at engaging young people. This requires four elements:

### 1. EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION:

#### Promote mental health and wellbeing in schools

- a. Embed mental health as a core theme in the national curriculum
- b. Provide access to counselling and mentor support in schools for all young people who need it

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"Spotting the signs of the disorder early can help ensure the young person and their family receives the treatment and support they need..."

**Professor Chris Hollis, Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Nottingham<sup>11</sup>**

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It is imperative that we focus on prevention, and educate young people about the importance of mental health and wellbeing, providing them with advice and guidance regarding positive coping mechanisms. In addition, services need to be able to address problems as soon as they arise. Early on in life, young people face significant pressures, including the transition to secondary school, the stress of exams, and issues such as bullying. Providing help for young people when low level issues first surface can prevent them from developing into something more serious, and is a key part of the general guidance from the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE). Early support can also reduce the financial costs to the individual and to society further down the line.

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<sup>11</sup> Collins, C, Spot signs of psychosis and schizophrenia early, NICE, 23 January 2013

Young people need to have access to support when they need it, and be reassured that this support is available for a sustained period of time. No young person should feel isolated or not know where they can access the support they need.

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“I didn’t talk to anyone about how I was feeling for ages. I just felt really sad and then one time I broke down and said to my mum and dad, ‘I need help, I don’t know what’s wrong but something’s really not right. I’m just so sad all the time’.”

**Female, aged 20**

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## **2. INCREASED PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AND ADVICE:**

### **Improve services – focus on early intervention, and provide more counselling and therapeutic support for young people across the UK**

Counsellors and mental health professionals provide the bedrock of young people’s mental health services. They are trained to provide high quality support, and experienced in what advice to give.

To be effective, any new approach to supporting young people’s mental health needs to efficiently use the experience and expertise of professionals as part of its service – and increase the number and quality of these professionals where possible.

## **3. HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER**

### **Provide community awareness campaigns and peer mentor programmes to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for children and young people**

The stigma associated with mental health prevents services from being effective and reaching all those who need it. Too many young people are reluctant to talk about their problems.

To end the stigma and poor attitude to mental health problems, young people need to be encouraged to help each other. There is a growing recognition that peer support, particularly in the case of health promotion, complements existing support strategies for children.<sup>12</sup> In addition, schools and youth groups need to acknowledge mental health and wellbeing as a core issue for their young people, and commit to promoting awareness of these issues and how to get help when it’s need.

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<sup>12</sup> For example, see Turner, G. (1999) Peer support and young people’s health, *Journal of Adolescence*, 22, 567–572 and Department for Children, Schools and Families (2010) Promoting the emotional health of children and young people: guidance for Children’s Trust partnerships, including how to deliver NI 50.

## 4. PROVIDE ONLINE ACCESS TO SERVICES

**Provide access to safe online support services that understand and address the needs of children and young people**

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“My generation is constantly online - it’s where we look for information and advice, which is why I think a site like MindFull will make an enormous difference to young people who feel like they have no one to turn to.”

**Jessica, aged 16**

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A new approach to delivering services needs to make use of the internet as a way of reaching young people. The internet is everywhere in young people’s lives: at school, at home, and on the mobile phone in their pocket. In our survey, over two thirds (68%) of respondent thought that putting mental health services online would be an effective way to tackle the problem, whereas only 2% said that medicine alone is the best way to treat mental health issues.

## The solution: MindFull

MindFull is a mental health service for 11 to 17 year olds that combines the use of professional counselling and psychotherapy with self-help resources and peer support. It uses social networking technology to bring together counsellors, mental health professionals and young people, providing a practical, accessible and safe space for young people in distress or who just want to talk.

It aims to improve young people's mental health and wellbeing, by developing emotional resilience and positive coping mechanisms, supported by high quality counselling and psychotherapy. It aims to lead a cultural shift towards early help, wellbeing and positive mental health through actively engaging young people in the design, development and delivery of services.

MindFull is an **early intervention** approach. It is designed for young people who may not have engaged with any mental health services before., enabling them to immediately talk about the issues affecting them, and receive the advice and support they need – before their conditions worsen or become chronic.

MindFull provides a place where young people **can talk to a qualified counsellor**, or access self-help, when they want, giving them a choice in the support they receive, increasing engagement and improving outcomes.

MindFull provides a place where **young people can talk to other young people**. We are training peer mentors in schools and communities across the country; young people who understand, have gone through similar issues, and can provide empathy and advice. Through training peer mentors, we will seek to change the culture in schools to one which recognises the importance of mental health and wellbeing, and reduces stigma.

MindFull is **online**, meaning it is efficient, cost-effective, and unaffected by geographical boundaries or time constraints. It provides young people with a private, anonymous and easily accessible entry into mental health support services, in a format they recognise and trust, and can access whenever they need it, wherever they are.

Online counselling through MindFull can deliver the same, if not better, mental health outcomes as offline counselling at approximately 15% of the cost. Free of the overheads and capital costs associated with counselling from a fixed location, MindFull also has no waiting times: young people can access support from peers and counsellors immediately.

## CASE STUDY - SOPHIE (18)

Sophie started suffering from depression when she was 15 years old. She had a difficult home-life and was forced to move out of her parents' home to live with a friend when she was seventeen. Last year the depression became overwhelming and Sophie tried to take her own life on several occasions.

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*"I locked up how I felt and I couldn't talk to anyone. You feel like you are in a box and you scream and scream but no-one can hear you, no-one can help."*

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At that time Sophie was also struggling with an eating disorder, and went through cycles of 'binge eating' and using laxatives after being bullied about her weight. She shut herself away from friends and found they gradually drifted away. It was when she came across online counselling through BeatBullying that she managed to get support.

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*"When I had the counselling I felt like a weight was lifted off my shoulders. I sat on my bed afterwards and thought, 'thank God for that, she understood'. It was such a relief to finally talk to someone about what I was going through."*

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She says online counselling has provided a safe and secure place where she can go, and has helped build a bridge to getting face-to-face support through CAMHS.

Having just turned 18 Sophie is now applying for apprenticeships but her long-term ambition is to go to collage to study psychology. She is part of the MindFull Youth Panel that has helped to shape the new charity and online service.

## **Conclusion**

This report clearly demonstrates that it is time to completely revise our approach to how we view and support young people's mental health in the UK. We need to move away from only tackling the symptoms of acute poor mental health and wellbeing, to focus on education, prevention and early intervention. . Awareness of the importance of mental health must be integrated into every aspect of young people's development –in schools, health services and the community as a whole. Young people need to be encouraged to speak out about their mental health and wellbeing and feel confident that, when they do, they will receive the support they need as swiftly and as easily as possible.

**MindFull** provides this in an efficient, cost-effective and accessible online service, combining professional counselling and peer support, and helping young people develop to live full, happy and healthy lives.



